

ARCAIC FACT AND FANCY

AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES, NORSE MYTH, EGYPTIAN MORALS, HINDOO YOGA.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF NORTH AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY. By Professor Cyrus Thomas. Octavo, 150 pp., 10 cents. The Robert Clarke Company.

THE GODS OF OUR FATHERS. A Study of Egyptian Mythology. By Herman I. Stern. Octavo, pp. xix, 288. Harper & Brothers.

SYRIA AND EGYPT. From the Tell el Amarna Letters. By W. M. Flinders Petrie, D. C. L., LL.D., Ph. D., Hon. Sc.D. Octavo, 1897, pp. vii, 18. Charles Scribner's Sons.

RELIGION AND CONSCIENCE IN ANCIENT EGYPT. Lectures delivered at University College, London. By W. M. Flinders Petrie. Octavo, pp. 178. Charles Scribner's Sons.

YOGA OR TRANSFORMATION. A Comparative Statement of the Various Religious Dogmas Concerning the Soul and Its Destiny, and of Akkadian, Hindoo, Teutonic, Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, Christian, Mahomedan, Japanese and Chinese Magic. By William J. Flagg. Octavo, pp. vii, 378. W. B. Ewing.

Professor Thomas has grave doubts as to the value of the evidence for man's existence in America during the Ice Age, or at any highly remote period of time. For that reason he begins his study with relics that are of undoubted human origin. These, he says, give no sign of antiquity comparable to that which can be assigned with dated accuracy to certain remains on the Eastern Continent. They are meagre, too, in comparison with the ruins of the Oriental world. But they are, nevertheless, immensely suggestive, and they fill up gaps which cannot be filled in prehistoric study without them. There is less of an interval in time, apparently, between the American prehistoric and the American and the temple builders than there is between the same characters in Europe. Professor Thomas accepts the conclusions of Mr. Mercer as to the inhabited caves of Yucatan, which limit the earliest human occupation of these places to a few centuries before more recent times than the cave-dwellers. Compared with the ruins of Southern Asia and Egypt, the mounds of the Mississippi Valley and the temples of Mexico are erections of yesterday. This fact simplifies the archaeological problem in America by excluding from serious consideration a vast number of theories which have attracted attention in the past. Hardly a shred of the speculation which filled volumes from Columbus's time down to the present is now worth the paper it is printed on. Of course, the possibility of great antiquity for man on the American Continent has not been done away with. But this possibility has nothing to do with the facts that are known. Nor is this the only limitation which Professor Thomas puts upon conjecture. If we assign a separate origin at will to the various bodies of men who have inhabited one another of North America, we can easily raise a towering fabric of theory. But from the gathered traditions of the tribes, the comparison of customs, the uniform physiology of the old Americans, Professor Thomas argues identity of origin. As all the facts known can be accounted for without presuming diversity of race, this presumption becomes merely speculative. The argument goes somewhat further than the study of different Indian languages would carry one, because it makes of the mound-builders Indians pure and simple, and nothing is known of the speech of those people. With his view of the case, Professor Thomas leaves the question open as to how men first came to this continent. Their traditions cast no light on the point. But they agree in pointing to the North, and generally in indicating a river system, such as that of the basin of Hudson's Bay. From that region they moved slowly southward in small groups after age. Of course, the Esquimaux is not counted in this movement. He is a difficult creature to classify. But it is noteworthy that culture on this continent does not begin at the uttermost primitivism. The Esquimaux and the Indian, as far back as they can be traced, have both been neolithic, not paleolithic, men. The differences among the various stocks start from that point. These differences are most obvious and certain in language, but they are also to be discerned in the remains scattered over the country. Professor Thomas does not meddle with philology, except to give results of investigation. The distinctions in the types of art enable him to make an efficient classification on geographical lines, one that can be easily understood by a beginner, while divisions based on language, though more minute and accurate, require special knowledge of an irksome kind. The Esquimaux is considered by himself in the Arctic division; the Atlantic division includes all the works east of the Rocky Mountains, except those of the Athabaskan region, while the Pacific division takes in all the relics of the highest culture to which the Indian attained. On the vexed question of the Toltecs, Professor Thomas maintains that such a people, as distinct from the other nations of the Central American area, once existed. That is to say, there are peculiar antiquities which must be specified as different from those around them, and Toltec is as good a name as can be found at present. Probably the Toltecs were really a branch of the Maya stock before the latter reached its final home. He is inclined to credit the highly artificial calendar in general use among the old Mexicans and Central Americans to the Zapotecs. He emphasizes the point that the investigation of American antiquities is only fairly begun, and infers from the results already attained the rich discoveries that await future effort. The book has special merit because of its moderation in statement and the clearness with which it brings out important facts from the confusion of details shown in museums.

Mr. Stern makes a heavy call on Saxon patriotism when he points to the whole fabric of Norse mythology as the work of Teutons in general. He will find everybody willing to accept Woden and Thor and Tyr and a god-as or two from his list along with the Valkyries. But when it comes to Valhalla and the whole of that post-Christian world drama which belongs to the Viking poets, he will find not a few who follow Vigfusson and science instead of trusting to Teutonic enthusiasm. If the Saxons had a notion of Valhalla, they should have had the corresponding word formed like the word Weylcyrie. But they do not appear to have had any such word, and there are no ideas that would suggest the word where they would be expected, for example, in the poem of Beowulf. That poem belongs to the age of Charlemagne. It knows of Woden's ancestors Seyd and Beow, and it is familiar with the Goddess Wyr, it is cognizant of the Weisung Sigmund and his dragon fight. But it knows nothing of the Vikings proper nor of the ideas which they developed between the age of Charlemagne and that of the Norman conquests. The Norse mythology is a splendid monument to the thought and imagination of a brave and adventurous nation, but there is no evidence that the Saxons shared in any but its simplest and most rudimentary legends. Mr. Stern has written an enormous book on Norse mythology with hardly a trace in it of what is actually known as peculiar to the Saxons. He traces all the outlines of a mythical system which in point of unity, of harmony in its parts and of moral grandeur surpasses all others. He points out, too, how much of the moral teaching of the Norse legends is still fresh and unexhausted, applying better to the sins of modern life than to those of the Northern themselves. But the Northern were really looking from the outside at a civilization like that of modern times, that of decaying Southern Europe. They despised the trading spirit of the South, and they foretold its catastrophe. But they were blind to the calamities which were due to their own excessive cruelty and drunkenness. Their own

Ragnarok was not a fire, but a deluge—a deluge of mead.

It is hard to look at the now-famous Tell el Amarna letters, whether in facsimile or translation, or in compact summaries, as given here by Professor Petrie, without an exclamation of wonder. Not so very long ago it was thought impossible that there could have been writing in the time of Homer. Then it was conceded that there might have been a few scribbles scattered throughout the world before 1000 B. C. But these letters made it plain that writing was as general an accomplishment for men of affairs on the east coast of the Mediterranean almost thirty-five hundred years ago as it is today. The art was not confined to capitals like Memphis and Babylon, but was practised regularly at frontier outposts and mountain blockhouses, and in the tents of nomadic chieftains. It was not a very convenient script which those people used, but it served their purpose. They compare well with the small local official of modern times. One would say that if they came back to earth now they could take up the business of life just as if nothing had happened, so far as intelligence and education were concerned. How little change there was in the government of Syrian cities from this remote period down to the time of Roman supremacy is shown by letters in which the municipalities are seen to have had practical home rule. When they quarrel they appeal to the King of Egypt, but they send embassies and transact business as bodies of free people. They even send collective letters as a people to the King. In place of the personal letter which would be expected from a chief appointed by the King, "If we mourn," wrote the people of the town of Dunip, threatened with siege and sack, "the King will also have to mourn." Then they apostrophize themselves in a manner which shows that Hebrew poetry had its models: "And now Dunip your city weeps, and her tears are running, and there is no help for us." The whole group of letters relates to a national tragedy, the fall of Egypt from her position as a power in touch with all the world to the weakness and seclusion in which she gradually decayed till the Persian came. She must have been a kindly sovereign. The Syrian tribes evidently hated to give up their loyalty to her.

The volume first mentioned and another by Professor Petrie on religion and conscience in ancient Egypt are in the nature of footnotes or an excursus to his history of Egypt. Speaking of religion, the author develops his theory of origins in Egypt, each race bringing its own customs and its own worship. In this way he accounts for much of the confusion observed in Egyptian beliefs. To the negro Egypt owed its animal worship; to the Libyans, with their Greek affinities, the worship of gods in human form and human character; to Asiatics, the gods representing the elements of nature, and to the Runic race, the worship of abstract ideas embodied in some symbolic form. To the negro Professor Petrie credits the tomb-haunting ghost and the bird-shaped soul in which the Egyptians believed; to the Libyans the theory of the blessed Amenti, that is Elysium; to the Asiatic, the voyage of the soul in the ship of the sun, and to the Runic race, the development of the mummy system as a religious practice. He appears to put these distinctions as hypothetical. But it is well known that something of the kind is needed to meet the evidence from outside of Egypt, as well as to explain the divergence of beliefs shown sometimes in a single chapter of "The Book of the Dead." Professor Petrie brings the modern statistical method to bear on his theory of conscience. But it must be confessed that he hardly seems to have matured the theory as applicable to Egypt. What he shows for the old civilization of the Nile is a very practical, prosaic moral system in which there was a deal of polite self-seeking and very little self-denial. After inspecting the precepts of Ptah-hotep, the list of offences avoided by the soul on trial in "The Book of the Dead," and other collections of maxims quoted, one wonders how the Egyptian finally evolved under Christianity the frightful asceticism of the Thebaid. "In the old Egyptians," says Professor Petrie, "there is hardly a single splendid feeling; there is not one burst of magnanimous sacrifice; there is not one heartfelt self-deprecation. They are as canny as a Scot, without his sentiment; as prudent as a Frenchman, without his ideals; as self-conceited as an Englishman, without his family."

Readers who do not believe in the revelations of Spiritualist séances will doubtless criticise much of Mr. Flagg's book in almost the same words which he bestows upon the visions of Swedenborg when he describes them as "phantasmagoria of the subjective kind." Anything can be proved about the supernatural world, if the premises, which are always imaginary, are granted at the outset. But nobody believes in anything supernatural except what he invents for himself. The wholly unreal character of all this sort of speculation and its complete dependence on individual idiosyncrasies can be tested by any one who will get a group of persons to read, say Dante's Inferno, and give separate accounts of it. The way they will differ from each other and from their model will startle one who has had no experience with such tests. For that reason Mr. Flagg's pet theories have little to do with the genuine value of his book, a really remarkable comparative study of ancient and modern magical beliefs and practices. He starts with the opinion, sanctioned by Herbert Spencer and others, that religion, and indeed all faith in the supernatural, begins in ancestor worship. But ancestor worship is merely the earliest form, he says, of what is now called spiritualism. These two ends of the chain are linked together by the constant recurrence of similar beliefs in all ages. This persistent faith may prove only the wistfulness of mankind for life, or it may be held to prove that immortality is a fact. Mr. Flagg appears to cherish the latter opinion. But this fact is of significance to mortals still physically alive only on the supposition that the immortals can be persuaded or compelled to give advice and assistance. The belief that they can be controlled is all there is that is of import in religion. But when the practices by which this control is sought are enumerated and examined they are found not to be religious, but magical. The moral effects of this magic are seen to be good by the example of the Esquimaux, the Chinese and the old Japanese. While the subject can be illustrated from the customs of every race and from the underlying facts of every ritual, including those of the Christian Churches, its highest development is in the Hindoo Yoga. Mr. Flagg indulges very little in the pedantic variety of footnotes, and so it is quite impossible to trace his authorities. But the internal evidence of his book goes to show that he has depended for his knowledge of both Greek and Oriental theory mainly upon English and French essays and translations. There he has gathered from this circumstance the reason why, in spite of Professor Flagg's David's emphatic protest against confounding Hindooism with Buddhism, Mr. Flagg says that Yoga is Buddhism. However, that is only an aside. Buddhism was once a protest against the supernatural. According to Mr. Flagg Yoga is the strongest proof of the supernatural. Its practice now is most varied and complicated, but its object is simple concentration, the inevitable result of which is infinite power. But the processes, as described, seem very artificial. The sceptic derides or pities, according to his mood, the devotees of this complicated scheme. Mr. Flagg sees that his whole argument as to the value of the primeval magic depends upon his showing that all the practices of Yoga, physical, as well as mental, are due to a natural evolution, and that they follow unconsciously if a person is in condition for them. He can be

itemized and checked off while he relates, on one authority or another, what has happened in India for many centuries past. But when he says that these things are now being done in America he might well give dates, names and places, because he is trading where a mere man of science might like to make a test of this grand theory.

THE BANKERS' ASSOCIATION.

CLOSING SESSION OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION.

ANIMATED DISCUSSION OVER THE ALLEGED SCARCITY OF CURRENCY IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS—ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

Denver, Aug. 25.—The closing session of the twenty-fourth annual convention of the American Bankers' Association opened with a full attendance, the election of officers being on the program. After prayer William L. Royall, of Richmond, Va., read a paper on "The Need of Banking Facilities in Rural Districts." Mr. Royall argued the necessity of country banks leading to the resources possessed by that bank issuing them. He believed that this would remedy the "more money," which is continually heard from the rural districts. W. S. Wood, of the National Bank of Commerce, of Kansas City, Mo., condemned the ideas advocated in Mr. Royall's address from first to last. He declared that the West had seen enough of currency issues by local banks. The banking business, he declared, was highly developed all over the country. In the East large commerce had led to the establishment of banks of large capital, while in the West smaller commerce had been satisfied with smaller banks. In the West banks were too plentiful, competition had become so excessive that the banking business was not profitable, and consequently it was not being done. He advocated the branch bank system as the remedy for the trouble. Large city banks should absorb little country banks, then a plethora of money could not exist in one locality while an unsatisfied demand existed in another. Mr. Bonedrick, of Kansas, disagreed with Mr. Royall's assertion that the country districts lack banking facilities, especially in the West. He quoted figures to show the amount of money in the country. John P. Branch, president of the Merchants' National Bank of Richmond, Va., disagreed with all suggestions. He favored permitting country banks to issue currency on the same terms as city banks. George M. Reynolds, cashier of the Continental National Bank of Chicago, followed in a paper on "Uniform Laws for Holidays as Well as Days of Grace."

John W. Paxson, assistant cashier of the First National Bank of Chicago, read a paper on "Banking and Its Relation to Industrial Development." V. C. Witham, of Atlanta, followed in an address on "The Country Banker."

The Nominating Committee then made its report, which was adopted. The officers elected are as follows: President, George H. Russell, Detroit, Mich.; first vice-president, Walker Hill, president of the American Bankers' Association, Chicago, Ill.; second vice-president, Charles H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; third vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; fourth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; fifth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; sixth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; seventh vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; eighth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; ninth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; tenth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; eleventh vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; twelfth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; thirteenth vice-president, John H. Russell, Chicago, Ill.; fourteenth vice-president, John H. 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